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SUBJECT: Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom to Lead CPP in 2008 Presidential Elections

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On December 17, the Convention People's Party (CPP) elected on the first ballot Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom as its candidate for the 2008 Presidential election. Nduom, educated in the U.S. and a former minister in the Kufuor administration, urged the CPP to unite in his acceptance speech. Nduom, who angered many in the CPP with his endorsement of President Kufuor in the 2004 election, is a formidable candidate with strong credentials. Few expect the CPP to capture the Presidency, but given Nduom's background and appeal, he could siphon votes from the major parties and affect the outcome of the 2008 election. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On December 17, after a three day long convention and 18 hours of voting, the Convention People's Party (CPP) elected Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom as its candidate for the 2008 presidential election. The closely contested party election was marked by allegations of impropriety, but the election was conducted in an orderly manner and supervised by the Ghanaian Electoral Commission. Nduom won 54 per cent of the total votes with the next highest candidate being Professor Agyeman Badu Akosah, a former Director General of the Ghana Health Service, who received around 30 per cent of the vote.

13. (U) Nduom, 54, has served as Minister of Public Sector Reform, Minister of Energy, and Minister of Economic Planning in President Kufuor's administration. He also chaired Ghana's Millennium Challenge Authority. In 2004, he dropped out of the CPP race for Presidency to stand for Parliament in his home district of Elmina which he currently represents. Prior to joining government, Nduom served as a consultant at Deloitte and Touche for several years before relocating to Ghana in the early 1990s. Nduom has a PhD in Management from the University of Wisconsin.

14. (U) In his acceptance speech, Nduom urged unity in the party, forgave his detractors, and promised to work closely with all factions. Interestingly, he also said he plans to draw the CPP closer to business and said his election team is "a business oriented CPP group." On this theme he also announced that Alhaji Asumah Bandah, an influential shipping magnate would be assisting his campaign. Nduom underscored the need to reverse the past electoral defeats of the CPP, as the CPP received one per cent of the vote in the 2004 election, and proposed to rebuild the party at the grassroots level. He further urged party activists to honor financial commitments and to "defend what Nkrumahism means in the face of globalization and the dominance of capitalism," although he did not elaborate on this theme.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: While Nduom's election as CPP flagbearer is not a surprise, his margin of victory is noteworthy given the fractious nature of the CPP's nomination process. While Nduom did win an outright majority, many old line CPP members have not forgiven Nduom for his endorsement of President Kufuor in the 2004 election. Nduom's economic outlook also seems at odds with some of the CPP's philosophical leanings, although he has yet to address specifics. Despite murmurings from some CPP members who say they are unwilling to accept his victory, the CPP will likely rally around their elected leader.

